AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A reinforced trim panel assembly for a vehicle body panel comprising:

a first trim panel member adjacent to a second trim panel member along a first seam; and

a reinforcement bracket disposed between said trim panel members and the vehicle body ~~panels, and~~ panel, wherein said reinforcement bracket is positioned over said first seam and secured to a back side of each of said first trim panel member and said second trim panel member ~~using a fastening means, wherein said reinforcement bracket absorbs~~ to absorb a force from an impact to said trim panel ~~assembly~~ members to prevent separation of said first seam.

2. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The reinforced trim panel assembly as set forth in claim 1 wherein said first trim panel member is generally planar and extends vertically and longitudinally a predetermined distance, and said second trim panel member is generally planar and extends vertically and longitudinally a predetermined distance.

3. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The reinforced trim panel assembly as set forth in claim 1 wherein said reinforcement ~~member~~ bracket is generally planar and has a shape corresponding to the shape of said integral first trim panel member and said second trim panel member, and also extends longitudinally and vertically a predetermined distance, so that at least a portion of said first seam is covered by said reinforcement ~~member~~ bracket.

4. (Currently Amended) A reinforced trim panel assembly ~~as set forth in claim 1~~ for a vehicle body panel comprising:

a first trim panel member adjacent to a second trim panel member along a first seam; and

a reinforcement bracket disposed between said trim panel members and the vehicle body panel, wherein said reinforcement bracket is positioned over said first seam and secured to a back side of each of said first trim panel member and said second trim panel member to absorb a force from an impact to said trim panel members to prevent separation of said first seam;

wherein said reinforcement bracket includes an energy absorption aperture for absorbing energy applied to said reinforcement bracket.

5. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The reinforced trim panel assembly as set forth in claim 4, wherein said energy absorbing aperture includes a longitudinally extending slot bisecting said energy ~~absorbing~~ absorption aperture.

6. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The reinforced trim panel as set forth in claim [[1]] 4 wherein ~~said~~ a fastening means is ~~a screw~~ used to secure said reinforcement bracket to said first trim panel member and said second trim panel member.

7. (Currently Amended) A reinforced trim panel assembly attached to a body panel of a vehicle comprising:

a first trim panel member that is generally planar and extends vertically and longitudinally a predetermined distance;

second trim panel member adjacent to said first trim panel member along a first seam, and said second trim panel member is generally planar and extends vertically and longitudinally a predetermined distance; and

a reinforcement bracket disposed between said trim panel ~~member~~ members and the vehicle body ~~panels~~ panel, and positioned over said first seam and secured to a back side of each of said first trim panel member and said second trim panel member ~~using a fastening means~~, wherein said reinforcement ~~member~~ bracket is generally planar and has a shape corresponding to the shape of said ~~integral~~ first trim panel member and said second trim panel member, and also extends longitudinally and vertically a predetermined distance, so that at least a portion of said first seam is covered by said reinforcement ~~member~~ bracket, and said reinforcement bracket absorbs a force from an impact to said trim panel ~~assembly~~ members to prevent separation of said first seam.

8. (Currently Amended) A reinforced trim panel assembly ~~as set forth in claim 7~~ attached to a body panel of a vehicle comprising:

a first trim panel member that is generally planar and extends vertically and longitudinally a predetermined distance;

second trim panel member adjacent to said first trim panel member along a first seam, and said second trim panel member is generally planar and extends vertically and longitudinally a predetermined distance; and

a reinforcement bracket disposed between said trim panel members and the vehicle body panel, and positioned over said first seam and secured to a back side of each of said first trim panel member and said second trim panel member, wherein said reinforcement bracket is generally planar and has a shape corresponding to the shape of said first trim panel member and said second trim panel member, and also extends longitudinally and vertically a predetermined distance, so that at least a portion of said first seam is covered by said reinforcement bracket, and

said reinforcement bracket absorbs a force from an impact to said trim panel members to prevent separation of said first seam;

wherein said reinforcement bracket includes an energy absorption aperture for absorbing energy applied to said reinforcement bracket.

9. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The reinforced trim panel assembly as set forth in claim 8, wherein said energy absorbing aperture includes a longitudinally extending slot bisecting said energy absorbing aperture.

10. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The reinforced trim panel as set forth in claim [[7]] 8 wherein ~~said~~ a fastening means is ~~a screw~~ used to secure said reinforcement bracket to said first trim panel member and said second trim panel member.

11. (Currently Amended) A trim panel assembly attached to a body panel of a vehicle comprising:

a first trim panel member that is generally planar and extends vertically and longitudinally a predetermined distance;

a second trim panel member adjacent said first trim panel member along a first seam, and said second trim panel member is generally planar and extends vertically and longitudinally a predetermined distance;

a third trim panel member adjacent a lower edge of said second trim panel member along a second seam, and said third trim panel member is generally planar and extends vertically and longitudinally a predetermined distance; and

a reinforcement bracket disposed between said trim panel members and the vehicle body panels, and positioned over said first seam and said second seam, and secured to each of said first trim panel member, said second trim panel member, and said third trim panel member using a fastening means, wherein said reinforcement member is generally planar and has a shape corresponding to the shape of said ~~integral~~ first trim panel member, second trim panel member, and third trim panel member and also extends longitudinally and vertically a predetermined distance, so that at least a portion of said first seam and second seam is covered by said reinforcement member, and said reinforcement bracket absorbs a force from an impact to said trim panel ~~assembly~~ members to prevent separation of said first seam or said second seam.

12. (Original) A trim panel assembly as set forth in claim 11 wherein said reinforcement bracket includes an energy absorption aperture for absorbing energy applied to said reinforcement bracket.

13. (Currently Amended) A trim panel assembly as set forth in claim 12, wherein said energy absorbing aperture includes a longitudinally extending slot bisecting said energy ~~absorbing~~ absorption aperture.

14. (Original) A trim panel as set forth in claim 11 wherein said fastening means is a screw.